

**The Faction Paradox Protocols,
Volume Six:**

"A Labyrinth of Histories"

by
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Pre-Credits Sequence

F/X: Quiet, rural background. It's similar to the background we heard outside the church, before the rain started... but the birdsong's muted here, so we're indoors. The calm after the storm. There's the rustling of bedsheets, maybe some muffled moaning, and then...

JUSTINE [waking with a start]: Oh -

EMMA: It's all right! It's just me. **[N.B. She's clearly worried that Justine's still mad.]**

F/X: More sheet-rustling as Justine sits up in bed.

JUSTINE: Emma. Where am I?

EMMA: It's Aunt Fiora's bedroom.

JUSTINE [sniffs]: Is that why everything smells the way it does?

EMMA: I'm afraid so. We were going to call Dr. Fulford, but... you know what he's like. We thought we'd see if you came round first.

F/X: The sheets get thrown aside. It sounds as if Justine's trying to get up.

EMMA [hurriedly]: I don't think... I mean... I think perhaps you should rest. You must be feeling weak.

JUSTINE: No. I'm well, I think.

EMMA: You don't feel... mad, any more?

JUSTINE [a little distracted]: It's a strange feeling. As if something important happened, but a long way away.

EMMA [still worried]: Oh.

JUSTINE: It's quite all right. Really. Whatever it was, it's done with now.

EMMA: You're still not making any sense.

JUSTINE: I know. I'm sorry. But it feels like... like the storm's finished.

EMMA: The storm *has* finished.

JUSTINE: So it has. **[Pause.]** The window. Can I open it?

EMMA: I... don't think you should. It's still cold outside. Aren't you supposed to keep warm, when you're resting?

JUSTINE: Yes. Of course.

EMMA: Aunt Fiora's making more tea downstairs. I think she likes doing that.

F/X: Emma crosses the room. She stops as she reaches the door, so she's in the background here.

EMMA: I suppose we should tell your stepmother...

JUSTINE: I'll be able to set off home soon. I just need a few minutes, I'm sure.

EMMA: Oh. Well, good.

F/X: The door opens. Again, it's almost certainly creaky.

EMMA: If there's anything you need...

JUSTINE: Thankyou.

F/X: Emma hesitates before leaving. She shuts the door after her. Justine waits for a moment, then hurries across the room, and there's the sound of a window opening. The birdsong background gets louder, but after a moment or two we can also hear the sound of horses' hooves - maybe just one or two of the animals - coming this way.

JUSTINE: I *knew* it.

Fade into...

F/X: Outside the house: the same background but louder. In fact we seem to be with the main group of riders, so it's the usual "restless horse" background, but at least one set of hooves is approaching from the distance.

MORLOCK: Well now. If my senses don't deceive me, your heart-rate has increased by almost eight beats per minute and your adrenaline glands have become really rather busy. I take it you've found something exciting?

SABBATH [arriving]: It's her.

MORLOCK: The woman?

F/X: Sabbath draws level with Morlock. The hooves come to a stop.

SABBATH: Fiora Venn. Formerly Fiora James. That's her house.

MORLOCK: Are you sure?

SABBATH [clearly getting fed up]: I think I can recognise my own ancestor, Morlock. She's on the lower floor of the building. With one of the girls.

MORLOCK: And how, may I ask, do you come know that with such certainty...?

SABBATH: Heat-imaging. I can see their body-prints through the wall.

MORLOCK [tuts, but he's not serious]: Non-contemporaneous technology. Not native to the local environment. As your Second, I have to inform you that you're in breach of the rules of the hunt.

SABBATH: I've got a right to wear my mask. It's not my fault if it's got built-in sensors.

MORLOCK: Ah. Is there anything finer than abuse of privilege? So, now you've found her. What do you intend to do?

SABBATH: What do you *think*?

MORLOCK: And the girls?

SABBATH [wary]: What about them?

MORLOCK: You don't think they're at all significant? This hunt *is* a form of ritual, after all. If I were more melodramatic, I'd call their presence here an omen.

SABBATH [with some bitterness]: If you were any more melodramatic then you'd be walking around with a cape and a top hat.

MORLOCK: You saw what happened in the Field. There's clearly some sort of focal-point here. If events are shaping themselves around the girls, then at the very least they're potential prodigy material.

SABBATH: *Prodigy?* After what happened to the *last* one?

MORLOCK: Particularly after what happened to the last one.

SABBATH: No. This is *my* hunt, Morlock. We're here for my great-grandmother, not so you can recruit for one of your pet projects. We're not taking anybody back with us just because you're seeing omens.

F/X: He turns his horse around. It clops away from us throughout the next few lines.

SABBATH: I have to go and prepare the Cousins. We're nearly done here.

MORLOCK: A whole pack of Cousins, just for one middle-aged woman? And I thought you weren't foreseeing trouble.

SABBATH [moving further away]: They'll want to be blooded.

MORLOCK: Mmm. Godfather?

F/X: Godfather Sabbath pauses. The horse draws to a halt.

MORLOCK: How would feel about a small wager?

SABBATH: A bet? Here?

MORLOCK: Oh, I thought it seemed quite apposite. Since we're engaged in such a gentlemanly and aristocratic pursuit.

SABBATH: Get to the point.

MORLOCK: Suppose you fail to complete the hunt.

SABBATH: Like you said. She's just one woman.

MORLOCK: Quite. But just suppose.

SABBATH [grudgingly decides to go along with this]: Suppose I do. Then what?

MORLOCK: If you fail... then we take a consolation prize. You let me... shall we say... *influence* one of the young ladies.

SABBATH: Are you serious?

MORLOCK: Well, you can hardly refuse me if you're so confident. Besides, I'm happy to take responsibility for the girl in question.

F/X: The horses whinny impatiently as Sabbath considers this.

SABBATH: I've got no problem with that.

MORLOCK: And of course... if you lose then you also have to admit that I was right and apologise profusely.

SABBATH: Don't push it, Morlock.

MORLOCK: Do we have a wager?

F/X: Godfather Sabbath pauses before he answers... and in that pause, there's the sound of a window closing. A little way away.

SABBATH: What was that?

MORLOCK: You know, it sounded a lot like somebody closing a window.

SABBATH [more urgent now]: The girl. In the upstairs room.

MORLOCK: Mmm. She must be quite remarkably obsessive.

SABBATH: What?

MORLOCK: To close the window *before* running for help.

SABBATH: She could have heard...

MORLOCK: Well then. It seems you may be facing some resistance.

SABBATH [spurring the horse on]: *Hyah!*

F/X: The Godfather's horse gallops forward. Other hooves follow it, the horseback Cousins moving in to assist him.

Fade into...

F/X: Inside the house. From here we can't hear the horses yet. Everything's peaceful, and Fiora's pouring out the tea.

FIORA: There. She likes tea, doesn't she?

EMMA: I'm not sure. Her stepmother's idea of tea isn't quite... you know. Drinkable.

FIORA: Poor girl. I'm not surprised she's so upset, living with a woman like that.

F/X: Muffled footsteps, running down a flight of steps. Justine arriving in a panic.

EMMA: Oh dear...

F/X: Justine bursts into the room. Maybe through a door?

JUSTINE [hurriedly]: They're outside.

FIORA: Who are, love?

JUSTINE: The horsemen. The hunters. It's you they're after.

FIORA: Me?

JUSTINE: I heard them talking. They want to kill you. That's why they've come here.

EMMA [trying to be nice]: Justine... why would anybody want to kill Aunt Fiora?

JUSTINE: Mrs. Venn. Do you have any children?

FIORA [the question seems to strike a nerve]: I... no. Not yet. Lookie and I, we were always planning -

JUSTINE: So you don't have any grandchildren? Any great-grandchildren?

FIORA: How old do I *look* to you, Justine, dear?

EMMA: Of course she doesn't have any grandchildren. Why do you -

JUSTINE: He thinks you're his great-grandmother. The man in armour. I heard him talking.

EMMA: Love.... I know you think you're just trying to help, but -

JUSTINE: Listen!

F/X: At last, the sound of the horses' hooves becomes audible outside. They're moving at a gallop now. It sounds as if Godfather Sabbath's leading the Cousins in a charge. It's getting louder, fast.

EMMA: The horses...

JUSTINE: They're not horses.

FIORA: But surely they're only -

JUSTINE [desperate now]: Please. I know it doesn't make sense, but they want to kill you. That's why they're *here*.

F/X: But it's too late. There's the breaking of glass, and the shattering of wood, as several heavily-armoured animals burst through the front of the house and into the room. The horses bellow and shriek as they tear through the glass and carpentry, metal plating scraping against the brickwork, hooves crashing down on the floorboards and sending furniture flying. The Faction has arrived, in full attack mode, and it sounds utterly terrifying.

EMMA: *Justine!*

F/X: The horses tear their way further into the house, destroying everything in their path as their riders attempt to reign them in. But the horses just shriek louder. The attack becomes a wall of sound, then - very quickly - distorts, turning into an echo as we move out of the past and...

GRAMS: Title music.

Fade into...

F/X: The control core of the prison, Demetra's "office". Either the background's silent, or we can just hear the muffled sound of the assembly area nearby. Certainly, this is a "quiet" moment after the preceding horror. There's a long, long moment of reflection before Demetra deigns to speak.

DEMETRA: How?

F/X: No reply, but possibly a nervous shuffling of feet?

DEMETRA: It's a simple enough question. How?

SELVYNKESH: It... shouldn't be possible.

DEMETRA: "Shouldn't". In the same way that I *shouldn't* have been able to dream, while I was inside one of your coffins?

SELVYNKESH: They're not *my* -

DEMETRA [suddenly snapping]: *How?* [No reply. Demetra's calmed down by the time she speaks again.] Prisoners inside the caskets are in a time-frame out of synch with the outside world. Isn't that right?

SELVYNKESH: That's true. In theory.

DEMETRA: In theory. So there's no way... for example... someone in the casket could have some kind of weapon? Something to break them out of the time-frame?

SELVYNKESH: No. Well... you'd need a very specific kind of weapon. Something that could cut through time-fields. But that kind of technology... it'd be noticed...

DEMETRA: First Ordinary Selvynkesh. Official mover with honours. Whatever you like to be called. Are you aware of the fact that... the shadow of Grandfather Paradox can mimic *any* kind of weaponry?

SELVYNKESH: I... [briefly lost for words] ...it doesn't matter. Even if the Cousin *did* have that kind of weapon, she wouldn't know she had to use it. Prisoners don't understand what's happening to them, while they're inside the caskets.

DEMETRA: They dream.

SELVYNKESH: But nothing conscious. Nothing *real*.

DEMETRA: I saw my own past. Siloportem. The Castello. Music. Colour. Shape. The *past*, Selvynkesh. And I was *in* that past.

SELVYNKESH: Well... possibly. But you couldn't touch it. You couldn't influence it.

DEMETRA: No. *I* couldn't. But then, I'm not trained. Am I?

MANDEEMA: Rngrnh.

SELVYNKESH: Trained?

DEMETRA: You put a surviving member of Faction Paradox... a group that specialises in alternative time-frames... inside an alternative time-frame. And it never occurred to you that there might be side-effects?

SELVYNKESH: Like what?

DEMETRA: I think that's what I'm asking you.

MANDEEMA [ominously]: Nnrhgrhr.

SELVYNKESH: But it's not my fault!

DEMETRA: Well, maybe that's true. Maybe we *all* should have known better. But here's my problem, First Ordinary -

F/X: The door of the "office" unexpectedly slides open. We can hear the muted background of the assembly area outside.

RENDERMANN [entering]: Kine!

DEMETRA: Colonel Rendermann. I'm... glad to see you've recovered.

RENDERMANN: They're coming. We've seen them. They're on their way.

DEMETRA: Coming...?

RENDERMANN: The House Military. Transit capsules, hundreds of them.

SELVYNKESH: What?

RENDERMANN: A channel's been opened up from the Homeworld. We can see them from the observation gallery. They're going to be here inside half an hour.

DEMETRA [after a tense silence]: Well. We'd better prepare for war. Hadn't we?

RENDERMANN: We need to release more prisoners -

DEMETRA: Thankyou, Colonel. But I can take care of the strategy.

RENDERMANN: We need more people -

DEMETRA [snaps]: Colonel! **[Instantly calm again.]** I'm sure I don't have to remind you... I'm still in command of this facility. You still owe me your loyalty.

F/X: There's a pause, then Rendermann leaves the room without another word. The door slides shut behind her. The room's quiet again.

MANDEEMA: Grnrhnr.

SELVYNKESH: They really *are* coming. We have to leave here.

DEMETRA: No. Not until the Cousin's dead or back in my custody.

SELVYNKESH: The Houses can deal with her. When they've got the prison back under control again.

DEMETRA: And would *you* trust them to do that? After she's already escaped once?

F/X: Demetra rises from her chair, if we can make that out.

DEMETRA: Now. Even with the records locking us out, you can still release any prisoners in the facility, true?

SELVYNKESH: You want an army?

DEMETRA: No. I just want you to open four specific caskets. That's all.

SELVYNKESH: Four? [**Not understanding.**] Are they friends of yours? From the Coteries?

DEMETRA: Associates. Not friends.

SELVYNKESH: It'll take a while to unlock the records...

DEMETRA: Then you'd better get to work.

SELVYNKESH: But four more prisoners isn't going to make a difference. Not once the Military gets here.

DEMETRA: I'm just interested in the Cousin. The Military's not my concern.

F/X: The door slides open again, filling the room with background noise. There's a pause before Selvynkesh risks opening his mouth.

SELVYNKESH: The other inmates aren't going to stand a chance, are they?

DEMETRA: They don't have to fight. It's their decision.

SELVYNKESH [troubled]: Yes. I suppose it is.

Fade.

F/X: In the labyrinth, Justine and Shuncucker are engaged in combat. All we can hear is a series of blows and counter-blows, two similar-sounding shadow-weapons repeatedly clashing, parrying and sliding off each other... effectively, the Faction Paradox version of a lightsabre fight. It makes a hell of a noise, suggesting something dirty, fast-paced and brutal. It's a while before there's a lull in the fighting.

SHUNCUCKER: What is that thing you're using there, anyway? That... "woosh" thing you've got...

JUSTINE: It's a Japanese fighting-stick. I'm sure you wouldn't be familiar with it.

SHUNCUCKER: Huh. It's very nice.

F/X: One single, heavy blow from Suncucker's weapon, blocked by Justine.

SHUNCUCKER: Mine's better.

F/X: A volley of blows from Shuncucker, all of them parried by Justine. There's another lull.

JUSTINE: Evidently not.

F/X: Now Justine goes on the offensive, a rapid-fire series of blows which Shuncucker only just manages to deflect.

VEEBLE: Stop it!

F/X: Nobody's listening. The sound of battle fills up the scene again, equally vicious on both sides. It carries on throughout the next few exchanges.

VEEBLE: *Stop it!*

SHUNCUCKER: Sorry, did you say something?

VEEBLE: Why are you fighting each other?

JUSTINE: I have to admit, the question *was* beginning to cross my mind.

SHUNCUCKER: What do you mean, why are we fighting each other? We've -

F/X: One particularly loud and intense blow from Shuncucker, followed by a brief silence.

SHUNCUCKER: - hah. Got you.

F/X: Justine immediately goes back on the offensive. The fighting becomes increasingly intense here, as if both sides are trying to bring the fight to a fast conclusion.

JUSTINE: Hardly.

SHUNCUCKER: We've *got* to fight each other. Just listen to her.

F/X: The conflict reaches a peak of speed and noise, then ends, apparently in a stalemate. Both combatants are starting to run out of breath now.

JUSTINE: I really don't understand what you're trying to achieve. Your weapon obviously isn't strong enough to do any real damage.

SHUNCUCKER: Oh, is that what you think? Maybe I'm just toying with you.

F/X: One big blow from Shuncucker, easily blocked.

JUSTINE: And perhaps *I'm* toying with *you*.

F/X: One big blow from Justine. It seems to connect.

SHUNCUCKER [small grunt of pain/ irritation]: That's very good. That's annoying, but... it's very good.

F/X: The sound of Shuncucker dropping her shadow-weapon to the floor.

JUSTINE: You're surrendering?

SHUNCUCKER: Oh... yes. That's what I'm doing. I'm dropping my weapon because I want to surrender.

JUSTINE: I'm glad to hear it.

SHUNCUCKER: And not because, say... I've now got a great big shotgun stuck to my shadow.

JUSTINE: I beg your pardon?

VEEBLE: Um... I don't think she's telling the -

F/X: One blast from a shotgun. It's a shadow-shotgun, though, so it's treated with the same kind of F/X as the standard shadow-weapon sound.

SHUNCUCKER: Hah!

F/X: Another blast from the shotgun.

JUSTINE [winged]: *Ahh!*

F/X: Repeated blasts from the shotgun, although it sounds as if most of the "bullets" are hitting the walls. The occasional shot can be heard behind the next few lines.

VEEBLE [shouts, desperately]: You're on the same side!

SHUNCUCKER: Of course we're not on the same side! She thinks she's more important than I am!

VEEBLE: But you're both Faction Paradox!

F/X: Shuncucker stops firing. There's a pause.

SHUNCUCKER: Technically... just technically... I've got to admit you're onto something there.

F/X: A shadow-weapon's dropped, and suddenly there's a jagged burhing sound in the air. It seems to come from the same point in the stereo picture where Justine's "standing", and again, it's got F/X which suggest a shadow-weapon.

SHUNCUCKER: That's *got* to be in my head.

F/X: Whatever it is that's burhing, Justine swings it in Shuncucker's direction. There's a noise which sounds like something slicing through metal, albeit with the usual "shadowy" F/X.

SHUNCUCKER: Hey!

JUSTINE: Chainsaw severs shotgun, I think.

SHUNCUCKER: That's not fair! You changed weapons! Only *I'm* supposed to do that.

JUSTINE: *If* you'd care to listen to me. I happen to be carrying the shadow of -

F/X: Shuncucker drops her weapon. Then, instantly, another shadow-weapon noise. It's a loud "wumf", like some kind of sonic shockwave.

JUSTINE [falling]: Mmf!

SHUNCUCKER: Gravity whip beats chainsaw.

F/X: A second burst from the gravity whip. Justine drops her chainsaw, and the burhing ends.

VEEBLE: Please, just listen -

SHUNCUCKER: What's that you've got there?

F/X: Huge, shadowy burst of noise, an impact big enough to throw Shuncucker from one side of the scene to the other.

SHUNCUCKER [across the stereo picture]: *Aaaaaaaaaaaaah!*

JUSTINE [getting angrier than usual]: Demolition battery beats gravity whip.

SHUNCUCKER [from the distance]: I'm going to *have* you for that!

F/X: Justine fires the demolition battery down the passage. In the background we might just be able to hear Shuncucker dropping her weapon again.

VEEBLE: You're tearing the place apart!

JUSTINE: It's hardly my responsibility if -

VEEBLE: Duck!

JUSTINE: *Hup* -

F/X: A searing beam of energy sweeps across the foreground, the kind of blast which sounds as if it could cut through several metres of solid rock. It pans across the stereo picture, suggesting that Shuncucker's sweeping it across the passage in an arc. At some point Justine drops her weapon.

SHUNCUCKER [coming closer]: Parallel cannon beats -

JUSTINE: Anti-chronon mortar!

F/X: The start of a ridiculously loud series of shadow-weapon noises, a whole arsenal of ludicrous SF armaments being used in a confined space. There are also the constant sounds of the two combatants dropping their weapons and re-arming, if it's going to be audible over the racket. This fight is reaching a crescendo.

SHUNCUCKER: Quantum violator!

VEEBLE: No! That'll make the whole structure of the labyrinth -

JUSTINE: Quantum interval ram!

SHUNCUCKER: Retrocollider!

JUSTINE: Doomsday weapon!

SHUNCUCKER: *Double* doomsday weapon!

F/X: Suddenly, it all goes quiet. We should get the impression of Justine and Shuncucker just staring at each other in the middle of the passage. The only sound we can hear is a quiet ticking, which comes from two directions

at once and isn't in synch with itself, as if both combatants are holding a bomb that's ready to go off. It's Justine who finally breaks the hush.

JUSTINE: And what, precisely, is a "double" doomsday weapon?

SHUNCUCKER: I don't know. But I've got one. Look.

VEEBLE: Erm. Cousin Justine? That grenade your shadow's holding... what exactly is it?

JUSTINE: I'm not entirely sure. But it came when I requested a doomsday weapon, so I think it's fair to assume it can do its job.

SHUNCUCKER: Mine's bigger.

VEEBLE: But... crucially... if either one of you uses one of those things, then we're all going to die, yeah?

SHUNCUCKER: God, yeah.

JUSTINE: I think that goes without saying.

VEEBLE: And... you *are* meant to be on the same side.

F/X: A long silence, apart from the ticking.

JUSTINE: On the count of three?

SHUNCUCKER: On the count of three what? Oh. You mean, we drop our weapons. All right then.

JUSTINE: Good.

SHUNCUCKER: But mine's still bigger.

JUSTINE [trying to ignore her]: Very well. One.

SHUNCUCKER: Two.

JUSTINE: Three.

F/X: The ticking goes on. Nothing changes.

SHUNCUCKER: *I* get to say three. **[Long pause.]** Three.

F/X: Again, the ticking goes on

VEEBLE: Oh, for... *three*.

F/X: There's a pause. Then the sound of a shadow weapon being dropped: one of the ticking noises immediately ends. This is followed by another, agonisingly long, pause before another weapon drops and the ticking ceases completely.

SHUNCUCKER: Quickest arms race *I've* ever seen.

JUSTINE [now everyone's breathing normally again]: Have we met before? You seem... familiar, somehow.

SHUNCUCKER: That's because I'm famous.

JUSTINE: Famous?

SHUNCUCKER: Shuncucker. Last scion of the Faction homeworld, blah blah blah blah. I'm the last hope for the future, basically.

JUSTINE: I'm sorry to hear that. It must be a great burden on you.

SHUNCUCKER: Are you being sarcastic?

VEEBLE [stepping in quickly]: Look... we're just supposed to be finding for a way out, that's all.

SHUNCUCKER: No we're not! We're supposed to be killing this Kine woman everyone keeps talking about.

JUSTINE: Kine? Is she seven feet tall? Covered in tattoos, with a metal grill in her neck?

VEEBLE: No, that sounds like her bodyguard.

SHUNCUCKER: I thought I killed her?

JUSTINE: She was certainly alive when I left her. I persuaded her not to follow me.

VEEBLE: Is this important? We should just be getting out of here.

JUSTINE: I'm inclined to agree.

VEEBLE [relieved]: Good.

SHUNCUCKER: Lightweight.

JUSTINE: *Once* somebody explains to me exactly what's going on.

Fade.

F/X: Prison chamber background. Two sets of footsteps can be heard entering the room.

SELVYNKESH: Chamber twelve, gallery four. They were interred at the same time, so they're all in the same place.

DEMETRA: Which caskets?

SELVYNKESH: Seventeen to twenty. They should be along the wall next to the -

F/X: The footsteps come to a halt.

SELVYNKESH [with some disgust]: - oh, no.

DEMETRA: That's them. Start the disinterment.

SELVYNKESH: Are they human?

DEMETRA: Post-human. Like most of us.

SELVYNKESH: But they don't have faces. They've just got -

DEMETRA: Tattoos. Time-active, memetically-engineered tattoos. We were very proud of them.

SELVYNKESH: Can they *see*?

DEMETRA: Not in the way you mean. Start the disinterment.

F/X: Selvynkesh hesitates before activating the mechanism. One of the caskets slowly begins to open, as when Shuncucker was released,

DEMETRA: And the others.

F/X: Other, identical, mechanisms are engaged. One after the other.

DEMETRA: Your technology. The science of the Great Houses. It's based on a kind of high-order mathematics, isn't that right?

SELVYNKESH: Well... yes.

DEMETRA: Those tattoos *are* the mathematics. The same protocols that drive your people's timeships. Coded right into the skin.

SELVYNKESH: But your race doesn't have time-travel. You don't even perform experiments, you're supposed to have laws -

DEMETRA: My family *makes* the laws, First Ordinary. Besides, my associates here can't move through time. They've just got a feel for it.

F/X: The first of the caskets has finished opening by now. The noise from within is... well, alarming. It sounds as though something's waking up, but the noise it makes isn't anything like human speech. It's more a kind of slow, drawn-out moaning, like the death-rattle of an animal, *but* it's coming from a creature with no mouth. Something horrible is coming out of its slumber.

SELVYNKESH: Are they... safe?

DEMETRA: They know how to follow orders. That's why we put them here.

SELVYNKESH: Put them here...?

DEMETRA: Think of them as like hunting-dogs. And Faction Paradox leaves a trail like nothing else in history, I don't need to tell you that.

SELVYNKESH: Put them here how?

F/X: By now all the creatures are waking up. All four of making the same distressing groaning noises, although some are higher-pitched than others. It doesn't sound nice.

DEMETRA: It's not hard to work it out. Four life-forms walking around with the secrets of the Great Houses written all over them? Your people were never going to allow that.

SELVYNKESH [realising]: You knew they'd be interred here. You planted them here, just in case one of your family ever got put into the

prison.

DEMETRA: You're close. But you're not thinking.

F/X: The creatures are now fully awake. They all sound as if they're in pain, and there's something decidedly mournful about the noises they make.

DEMETRA [addressing the creatures]: You all know who I am?

F/X: The creatures try to make a noise which is presumably their version of "yes".

DEMETRA: Good. Because this is the day when you prove your loyalty to the family.

F/X: This causes some excitement among the creatures. Their moaning gets louder and more intense, filling up the whole scene until it begins to...

Fade.

F/X: Another part of the labyrinth. The background hum seems more distant here, and there's none of the usual metallic clanging whenever anyone moves. There's also a different acoustic, suggesting a much larger space. Justine and company enter, and stop almost immediately.

JUSTINE [somewhat impressed]: Oh.

SHUNCUCKER: Right. Now we're getting somewhere.

JUSTINE: Yes. Now we're not following your instincts.

SHUNCUCKER: Don't be stupid. My instincts had to lead you to the point where you stopped listening to my instincts before you could get here.

VEEBLE: What?

JUSTINE: It looks like a library. Mr. Veeble? What *is* this place?

VEEBLE: Secure information dump. The Houses use it as a backup for classified data. It's outside of normal-time, so all the stuff here stays intact if anyone messes around with the timeline.

F/X: Justine takes a few steps further into the library.

JUSTINE: The library corridors must stretch for...

VEEBLE: ...a long way, yeah.

JUSTINE: You can barely see the ceiling. There must be hundreds of thousands of books in this section alone.

SHUNCUCKER: Homeworld's got a lot of secrets.

F/X: The sound of Shuncucker taking a book off one of the shelves and flipping through it.

SHUNCUCKER: God, look at this. These things are all hard-copy. Who uses hard-copy, these days?

VEEBLE: The Houses aren't very progressive.

JUSTINE: Do you have any idea which way the exit is?

VEEBLE: Yeah. Yeah, I think so. It's...

F/X: Movement, elsewhere in the labyrinth. Something approaching from one of the other corridors. From here we can hear a vague burbling noise, which - though we can't quite make it out yet - is actually the sound of Demetra#s hunting-creatures.

SHUNCUCKER: Well, here we go again.

JUSTINE: What is it?

VEEBLE: More inmates. Sounds like they're a couple of corners away.

SHUNCUCKER: It's not just inmates.

JUSTINE: How do you know? And I'd appreciate it if the words "superhuman instincts" weren't part of your reply.

SHUNCUCKER: Superhuman instincts, and sod you. Just *listen*.

F/X: The sound gets louder. By now we can start to make out that it's the creatures. On the warpath. Coming this way.

VEEBLE: Can we just run away this time, please?

SHUNCUCKER: You. Cousin. Whatever your name is. What's your shadow carrying right now?

JUSTINE: Ahh...

F/X: Shadow-weapon strike. Fairly ordinary.

JUSTINE: ...scimitar. Yourself?

F/X: Bizarre shadow-weapon strike. It makes a whoosh, then a screech, followed by a series of twinkles as if it's filling the air with fairy-lights.

SHUNCUCKER: Ooh. Pretty.

VEEBLE: Here they come.

JUSTINE: I think we're ready for them.

SHUNCUCKER: Faction Paradox is *always* ready.

F/X: The tracker-creatures burst into the library section, burbling excitedly, clambering over themselves to get at their victims. It's a desperate, chaotic noise.

SHUNCUCKER [some disgust]: God!

F/X: The "voices" get louder as the creatures fall on their prey. There's a single shadow-weapon blow from Justine, but the creatures don't seem to be affected at all.

JUSTINE: What *are* they?

F/X: Justine lashes out with her shadow-weapon, and repeatedly. It doesn't sound as if she's actually hitting anything. The creatures are right on top of "us" by now.

VEEBLE: Hit them! *Hit* them!

JUSTINE: It's not working! My shadow's not connecting -

F/X: The creatures are attempting to manhandle Justine. There's the ripping of fabric as they get their hands on her.

JUSTINE: *Ahh!*

F/X: A single sparkly shadow-weapon blow from Shuncucker.

SHUNCUCKER: Hey, you! You want to hit the saviour of Faction Paradox? Hit *me!*

F/X: One of the creatures bellows angrily through its no-mouth. There's the sound of a wet impact above the overall fracas.

SHUNCUCKER: Ow. God, you don't have to take everything so -

F/X: More wrestling, scuffling noises. The sound of the creatures becomes more excitable. Another shadow-strike from Justine.

JUSTINE: Get off me! Get *off!*

F/X: A whole series of shadow-strikes above the noise, some from Justine, some from Shuncucker. All to no avail.

JUSTINE: Shuncucker! They're immune to shadow-weapons!

F/X: Somewhere in the middle of the scramble, Shuncucker drops her weapon.

SHUNCUCKER: Flamethrower!

VEEBLE: Just *run!*

F/X: A burst from Shuncucker's flamethrower. It's a shadow-weapon, so the usual F/X apply. It *still* doesn't seem to affect the creatures.

SHUNCUCKER: Well, *they* might be immune.

F/X: Another burst from the flamethrower. The burning, crackling sound goes on after it ends. Shuncucker is setting fire to the library.

SHUNCUCKER: Books aren't.

F/X: More bursts from the flamethrower. The creatures sound agitated, or at least frustrated, by the burning books around them. If possible, there might be the suggestion of Justine pulling free of the monsters.

JUSTINE: Mr. Veeble. Pull the books off the wall.

VEEBLE: What? Why?

JUSTINE: Firewall. Whatever these things are, they burn.

F/X: Books being pulled from the shelves, accompanied by Shuncucker on the flamethrower. The creatures now go some way beyond "agitated" and start squealing. One of them might actually be on fire, and therefore in some pain.

SHUNCUCKER: Don't touch me, you revolting... object.

F/X: Impact of flesh on flesh. One of the creatures squeals plaintively.

SHUNCUCKER: Hah! Can still punch you in the face, can't I?

JUSTINE: Shuncucker! Over here!

F/X: The sound of the fire gets louder as the flames spread. The creatures continue to squeal, groan and generally make a racket. They'd be gnashing their teeth if they had any.

VEEBLE: They're staying on the other side of the fire.

JUSTINE: They're like animals. I think they're scared.

SHUNCUCKER: They're not scared. They're just not very smart.

JUSTINE: They're immune to our weapons. How?

SHUNCUCKER: Why are you asking me?

JUSTINE: I'm... really not sure.

VEEBLE: Look out!

F/X: A heavy impact, something falling to the floor from on high. Shelves are collapsing, bringing books raining down with them.

VEEBLE: Fire's spreading. The labyrinth's not built for this kind of thing.

F/X: Over the sounds of the fire, the sounds of the creatures become more focused and more agitated. Rather than just complaining they seem to be psyching themselves up for something.

SHUNCUCKER: Looks like they're getting ready to move again.

JUSTINE: I think that settles it. We run.

SHUNCUCKER: No we don't!

JUSTINE: We're practically defenceless -

SHUNCUCKER: What, you've never been in a fist-fight before?

JUSTINE [indignant]: Certainly not.

F/X: A horrible shrieking noise as the creatures throw themselves through the flame. The sounds of more violence, of physical impacts rather than shadow-weaponry.

VEEBLE: Justine!

SHUNCUCKER: Hey, you!

F/X: A big punch, then a heavy impact as one of the creatures falls back. It evidently lands in the fire, since the crackling noise gets louder and it starts to screech unpleasantly.

SHUNCUCKER: Crispy.

F/X: More flamethrower noises.

JUSTINE: Shuncucker, don't -

F/X: More shelves collapse. Louder this time. The library's going to pieces, and the creatures keep shrieking as the flames lick at them.

VEEBLE: Keep moving!

F/X: At least two pairs of footsteps, just audible over the chaos. Two of the group are leaving at speed. Guess who's not.

SHUNCUCKER [shouting]: Come on, then!

VEEBLE: Just *keep moving!*

F/X: The flame spreads and expands, the burning sounds filling the scene. More of the shelves collapse, almost drowning out the shrieking of the creatures and making it impossible to tell what's happening to the characters. At which point...

Fade.

F/X: Prison corridor, the same locale as scene A11. Three people making their way down the passage.

DEMETRA: None of the other inmates are following us?

MANDEEMA: Rh.

DEMETRA: Good.

SELVYNKESH: Is it safe down here, now you've let those things loose? They looked like they wanted to tear each other to pieces...

DEMETRA: They're primed to attack anything with time-altered biodata. It tends to give them a sense of self-hatred.

F/X: Footsteps end.

SELVYNKESH: This is it. The hatch leads out to the platform. I already opened a channel to the Homeworld.

DEMETRA: You've done very well, First Ordinary. I'm very pleased.

F/X: Selvynkesh presses several buttons on a keypad. The hatch slides open, and all present move through it.

Fade into...

F/X: The outrigger platform. Although it's obviously not going to be completely clear from the F/X, the idea is that the platform is a kind of "dock", an area outside the prison with acoustics that suggest an open, peaceful, exterior space. There's a constant whooshing, swirling sound all round, actually the sound of changing time-fields but suggestive of ocean tides, or possibly of a light breeze. It's a real contrast to the rest of the prison, although there's enough echo to make all the footsteps audible. Demetra, Selvynkesh and Mandeema step out onto the platform as we join the scene.

DEMETRA: This is the outrigger platform? I'm impressed.

SELVYNKESH: It's the one part of the prison that's open to the outside universe.

DEMETRA: So I see. You've never been to Siloportem, have you?

SELVYNKESH: No. No, I've never really -

DEMETRA: You should see the docks. The harbours. Coterie ships are always beautiful, did you know that? The shipbuilders, they're a very proud

people. [**Back to the present.**] It's a lot like this. You'd like it, I'm sure.

F/X: Demetra begins to walk along the platform, taking in the scenery. It might be a good idea to have her standing in the middle-distance here, to suggest a sense of space on the platform.

DEMETRA: Why do the stars keep changing?

SELVYNKESH: That's... not really the sky you can see. It's history.

DEMETRA: History?

SELVYNKESH: The prison's set outside normal-time. The way the constellations are shifting... that takes billions of years, in the real universe.

MANDEEMA: Nrrhn rhgr nnrhgrhr?

SELVYNKESH: Sorry?

DEMETRA: She wants to know which one's our home.

SELVYNKESH: I don't know. I'm not sure you can see it, right now.

DEMETRA: Maybe it's not important enough yet. What about the escape channel?

SELVYNKESH: It's there. You can't see it with the naked eye. If you want me to check it, there's a terminal...

DEMETRA: Go ahead.

F/X: Selvynkesh walks over to a terminal. After pressing a few keys, there's the same babbling machine "voice" we heard in scene A2.

SELVYNKESH: The channel's open. It's ready to use, we just have to... [**startled**] ...something's coming. Something's coming along the

channel.

DEMETRA: Good.

SELVYNKESH [panicking]: It's the House Military. I thought they'd be opening emergency channels from the Homeworld, but they must be coming through the exit route instead. We're not going to be able to get out without running into them -

DEMETRA: It's not the House Military.

SELVYNKESH: It must be. Nobody else could -

DEMETRA: My family could.

SELVYNKESH [bewildered]: The Blood Coteries? Here?

DEMETRA: They've had the prison under surveillance for nearly fifty years now. Watching the channels between here and the Homeworld. We might not have any time-travel projects of our own, but... we like to stay informed.

SELVYNKESH: Watching? What for? **[Realising.]** For a breakout.

DEMETRA: This escape route doesn't go to your Homeworld, First Ordinary. It goes straight to ours. Intercepting the channel isn't hard, once you know it's there.

SELVYNKESH [finally getting it]: Your people expected you to break out. That's why they made sure those four... things... were put here.

DEMETRA: The Coteries have stayed out of the way of the Great Houses for generations. We've never involved ourselves with time-technology, the way the Houses have. We've never done anything to interfere with your business. And then suddenly, forty-six years ago... I had

my own body wired for time, just like those four associates of mine. And because of that I ended up here. Didn't that strike you as strange?

SELVYNKESH: You *wanted* to come here. You wanted them to put you in prison.

DEMETRA: I told you. The one who carried the shadow of the Grandfather was a liability to us. For all kinds of reasons. It's a long story.

SELVYNKESH: But she was only interred here six months ago...

DEMETRA: You know the Houses. They couldn't let the one with the shadow go free for long. They had to put her here sooner or later. In the end, this was the easiest place to find her.

SELVYNKESH: You couldn't have known I was going to let you out. You couldn't have known you were going to be set free.

DEMETRA: It was a fair assumption. The Great Houses are falling apart right now, you know that. This prison was always an accident in the making. Let's be honest, the only surprise is that this hasn't happened before now. If we seriously believed this place was secure, we could have left the Grandfather here forever.

SELVYNKESH: You could have been here for centuries...

DEMETRA: Do you know what the cornerstone of good aristocracy is?

SELVYNKESH: Well... no.

DEMETRA: Patience. We make plans for things that even our grandchildren won't see. And our generations are longer than most, even if they're not as long as yours. Putting me here for a hundred years, or five-hundred, or a thousand... it was no big thing. **[Slight pause.]** Although I wasn't expecting to dream.

MANDEEMA [sombrely]: Nrrhn.

DEMETRA: So now all we have to do is wait. We wait for our ships to arrive, and we wait for our associates to bring us back the body of the Cousin.

SELVYNKESH: And what about me?

DEMETRA [reasonable as ever]: What about you?

SELVYNKESH: I don't belong where you come from. I want to go back to the Homeworld. Not Siloportem.

DEMETRA: I'm sure we can come to an arrangement. After all... you've still got my mark.

SELVYNKESH [even more troubled now]: Yes. Yes, of course.

Fade.

F/X: The background of the prison library, but even quieter than before. We can't hear any burning books or pursuing monsters here: just the sound of a single pair of feet, entering a new section of the hallway.

JUSTINE [calls out]: Shuncucker?

F/X: She moves into the foreground...

JUSTINE [calls out]: Mr. Veeble?

F/X: ...and suddenly comes to a stop.

JUSTINE [startled]: Oh!

MR. SMITH: This *is* a library, young lady. I'd be grateful if you didn't use it as an echo chamber.

F/X: Justine takes a few hesitant steps into the middle of the room.

JUSTINE: I beg your pardon. I seem to have lost my friends.

MR. SMITH: Mmmmmmm. And your "friends" seem to have burned their way through most of the Scarlet Chapterhouse collection. I have a nose for these things. **[Sniffs.]** Now they've started on the secret minutes of House Dvora. Thanks to them, nobody will find out who killed Lord Umbaste ever again.

JUSTINE: Pardon me, but... are you one of the inmates?

MR. SMITH: Do I *look* like an inmate?

JUSTINE: I'm not entirely sure. Do many of the inmates have the heads of bulls?

MR. SMITH: That, I think, is between them and their gods.

JUSTINE: And if they do, then do they tend to wear a monocle?

MR. SMITH: As it happens, before I was so rudely interrupted I was working my way through chapter four of Kipling's "Days of Other Empires". **[Sound of a book being snapped shut.]** There is, I suppose, no rest for the wicked.

JUSTINE: Kipling. Hardly the sort of matter you'd expect to find in a library of secrets.

MR. SMITH: It's from my own personal collection, since you ask.

JUSTINE: And I take it that you're the librarian? You seem to be a native of this place.

MR. SMITH: Mmmmm. I prefer to think of myself as a function of the library. An extension of the labyrinth. I trust you're familiar with the work of Chung Sen?

JUSTINE: I'm afraid not. But it might explain your appearance.

MR. SMITH: I happen to think the waistcoat's rather fetching.

JUSTINE: I was talking about the fact that you're a minotaur.

MR. SMITH: Clearly, you're not a patron of the classics. One can't be *a* minotaur. There was only *one* minotaur. The offspring of Queen Pasiphae and the Bull of Marathon. Anything else is just a man with a bull's head.

F/X: Somewhere off in the distance, beyond this part of the library, there's the vaguest hint of monsters making their way along another passage. Chasing something. It soon passes, but it obviously puts Justine on the alert.

JUSTINE: If you'll excuse me, I don't have time for literary discussion. I have other monsters to worry about.

MR. SMITH: If you say so. Although as de Vaschau pointed out, we frequently define ourselves according to the heroes of literature. Naturally, he was writing before the invention of cinema as an art form -

JUSTINE: Yes, well, as I say -

MR. SMITH: - but what he says holds true. For you especially.

JUSTINE [thrown]: For me?

MR. SMITH: Evidently. You present yourself as the great warrior, as a fierce and noble defender of her clan. Yet when you come across a mythical beast in a labyrinth your first instinct isn't to fight at all. Do you become Theseus? No. You instantly become Alice in Wonderland, which is perhaps what one would expect of someone born in the later nineteenth century. Not three minutes ago, you very nearly called me "sir". As a matter of fact, I'm reminded of Lewis Carroll's third and abortive "Alice" novel -

F/X: A sudden burst of violence, as Justine swings her shadow-weapon without warning. It sounds as if she hits a shelf, and a number of books fall to the floor.

JUSTINE [defiant, very nearly angry]: And would Alice do such a thing?

MR. SMITH: Mmmm. Violence. Would that make you more comfortable?

JUSTINE: To tell the truth, "sir"... it would be a relief to face something I *can* fight.

MR. SMITH: Very well. Then I suggest you arm yourself with a spear and a cape.

JUSTINE: I'm sure I can manage a spear.

MR. SMITH: In that case...

F/X: Mr. Smith suddenly loses his dignified composure, and begins stamping on the ground with one foot. At the same time he starts breathing heavily, blowing through his nose, snorting like a bull. He sounds like he's getting ready to charge. He also sounds a lot like Emma did when she was playing at being a monster (scene B3), but obviously Mr. Smith's credentials are a lot more impressive.

MR. SMITH: *Olé.*

F/X: Mr. Smith charges with a drawn-out lowing sound. The charge is met with a single strike from Justine's weapon before all goes quiet.

F/X: Prison corridor background, just outside the hatch to the outrigger platform. A pair of footsteps approaches, hesitates nervously, and then carries on. A second pair soon follows.

VEEBLE [hushed]: This way. We're close to the exit.

SHUNCUCKER [loudly]: Exit?

VEEBLE: Shh! Those things are still following us -

SHUNCUCKER: See, now you're getting me confused with the skinny redhead. I'm not the one who wants to get out of here.

VEEBLE: Look, you know you can't fight those -

F/X: Footsteps come to a halt.

VEEBLE: - it's open. The hatchway's already open.

SHUNCUCKER: You're not really a very interesting person, are you? You get surprised by everything.

F/X: More footsteps, but this time from somewhere up ahead. Somebody stepping through the hatch.

VEEBLE: Stay back!

SHUNCUCKER: Why?

VEEBLE: Stay round the corner, it's...

F/X: Footsteps approaching from the direction of the hatch. They soon stop.

VEEBLE: Selvynkesh?

SELVYNKESH [hisses]: Veeble!

F/X: Veeble and Selvynkesh rush to meet each other.

VEEBLE [hushed]: What's happening?

SELVYNKESH [also hushed]: It's Kine. She's... oh, I can't explain. She's tattooed me. There's no getting away now.

SHUNCUCKER: Am I supposed to be staying round this corner? 'Cos really, it's just not doing anything for me at all.

SELVYNKESH [startled]: What?

VEEBLE: Shh! Kine's people -

SHUNCUCKER: Through there, yeah?

VEEBLE: You can't do that! You don't know how many there are!

SELVYNKESH: Just two. Kine and her bodyguard.

SHUNCUCKER: See? Just two. I can take them with my eyes shut. Sod it, I *will* take them with my eyes shut. That'll be a laugh.

VEEBLE: Shouldn't we try to find Justine?

SHUNCUCKER: She's probably dead or injured or something. Anyway, you were the one who wanted to get out of here. So do I kill Kine now, or do we sit around and wait for those things without faces?

VEEBLE: Well -

SHUNCUCKER: Good.

F/X: Shuncucker's footsteps, as she heads off towards the hatch.

SELVYNKESH [hisses]: Wait...

F/X: Shuncucker steps through the hatch. Everything goes quiet.

VEEBLE: She never listens, y'know.

SELVYNKESH [wearily]: This was a mistake. It was all a mistake.

VEEBLE: What was?

SELVYNKESH: I just wanted to cause them trouble. I just wanted...
[deflates] ...I don't know. I don't know what I wanted. I can't even remember any more.

VEEBLE: Hang on. Are you saying what I *think* you're saying?

F/X: There's the very, very faint sound of movement from somewhere along the passageway. The first sign of Demetra's hunter-creatures approaching, complete with burbling.

VEEBLE: I think... we'd better go somewhere safe.

SELVYNKESH: "Safe"?

F/X: The creatures get closer - close enough that we're left in no doubt as to what's making the sound - before we...

Fade.

F/X: Outrigger platform background.

MANDEEMA: Rngrnh?

DEMETRA: It'll be over soon. See those five little points of light? They're our ships.

MANDEEMA: Grnrhnr.

DEMETRA: That's right. We're going home.

F/X: Stumbling footsteps. Shuncucker shambles onto the platform, tripping over her feet as she arrives.

SHUNCUCKER [background]: Nobody move. Well... all right, move. It'll make things more interesting if you move.

MANDEEMA: Nnrhgrhrrh!

DEMETRA: Mandeema, no -

MANDEEMA: Rhgr -

F/X: Heavy, pounding footsteps as Mandeema hurls herself across the platform to attack Shuncucker. The attack ends with a single, lengthy blast from Shuncucker's flamethrower. It's followed by the sound of Mandeema dropping to the ground, thumping the platform as she tries to put out the fire.

MANDEEMA [in agony]: *Rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrh!*

SHUNCUCKER: Ready for you that time.

MANDEEMA: Nrh...

F/X: Another blast from the flamethrower. There's some more thrashing before Mandeema lies still and everything goes quiet. Shuncucker moves across the platform and into the foreground.

SHUNCUCKER: And that's with my eyes shut.

DEMETRA: Is she dead?

SHUNCUCKER: No. She's just ugly enough to be dead.

DEMETRA [still calm]: Of course, you realise... Mandeema's one of the family's most loyal and most talented *legionnaré*. I'm not happy, Cousin Shuncucker.

SHUNCUCKER: Oh, finally! Someone who doesn't pretend she hasn't heard of me.

DEMETRA: I've got no reason to pretend. Not after our last meeting.

SHUNCUCKER: Meeting?

DEMETRA: I've got to admit, I'm surprised. When I saw the girl, I assumed you were dead.

SHUNCUCKER: Never mind that. What do you mean, meeting?

DEMETRA: When you almost killed me.

SHUNCUCKER: I almost kill a lot of people. Then I usually... kill them. Who are you, anyway?

DEMETRA [attempting to be patient]: Demetra Kine. You came to our home. **[No response.]** The Castello Nieva Risa.

SHUNCUCKER: You're thinking of someone else. No, you can't be, I'm too memorable. The Castello what?

DEMETRA: In Siloportem.

SHUNCUCKER: Never been there. Oh, wait... **[realisation dawns]** ...Kine. Siloportem. Starting to ring a bell. **[Snaps her fingers several times.]** Didn't I... didn't I cripple your family's thousand-year-old criminal empire, or something?

DEMETRA: I wouldn't say "cripple".

SHUNCUCKER: See, I never forget a face. And obviously, you've come here looking for revenge.

DEMETRA: Amazing as it seems... yes.

SHUNCUCKER: Knew it.

DEMETRA: And you're still carrying the shadow of the Grandfather?

SHUNCUCKER: Of course I'm still carrying the shadow of the Grandfather. What d'you think *this* is?

F/X: Another flamethrower blast. This one apparently not directed at anyone in particular.

DEMETRA: Interesting. What about the other one?

SHUNCUCKER: Other one? What other one? What are you talking about?

DEMETRA: Your friend. The Cousin.

SHUNCUCKER: You mean, what's-her-name? I don't know *who* she is. Nice shadow, though. Nearly as good as mine.

DEMETRA: Let me just make sure I understand. There *is* only one shadow of the Grandfather, is that right?

SHUNCUCKER: Well, *that's* a stupid question. Look, it's here. I'm going to hit you with it in a minute.

DEMETRA: I see. And if I pointed out that there are five Coterie ships-of-the-line heading for this dock? That in a few minutes' time, you're going to be surrounded by *legionnaré*?

SHUNCUCKER: I don't know. What if you did?

DEMETRA: You're not a reasonable woman, are you, Cousin Shuncucker?

SHUNCUCKER: Thank God someone's noticed. Ready?

DEMETRA: I'm ready.

F/X: A long, close-range blast from the flamethrower. It goes on for at least five seconds. There's an awkward pause once it's over.

SHUNCUCKER: No, that's no good. You're still standing up. Can you *do* that?

DEMETRA: So it seems.

F/X: A whole series of flamethrower noises, Shuncucker letting rip with a series of long and short blasts as if she's spelling out a message in Morse code. Eventually she gets bored and stops.

SHUNCUCKER [realising]: Shadow-weapons can't hurt you.

DEMETRA: Not after last time. No.

SHUNCUCKER: Hold on a minute. Did you send those things after me? Lots of tattoos? No faces?

DEMETRA: I'm glad they made an impression. Now... as I understand it, shadow weaponry only exists in the gap between the universal time-frame, and the perceptive time-frame of the individual. Which means that if you're wired for time -

SHUNCUCKER: Excuse me, did I ask you how it works? I didn't, did I? No. I'll tell you something, though.

DEMETRA: What?

F/X: *Thwack.* Not a shadow-weapon this time. Just a fist on flesh.

SHUNCUCKER: I can still punch you in the face.

DEMETRA [sounding hurt]: That... won't help you, Cousin.

SHUNCUCKER: Felt great, though. Hang on. Why won't it help me?

F/X: In the background we becoming aware of a groaning, burbling sound, mixed in with occasional grunts and screeches. The tracker-creatures are stepping through the platform's hatchway.

SHUNCUCKER: Oh, right. Them.

F/X: The screeching becomes more excitable as the creatures spot their prey, and scramble over each other to get onto the platform.

Fade.

F/X: Back to the library, and we're instantly met by the sound of a shadow-weapon slicing through the air, two strokes in quick succession.

There are heavy footsteps on the floor, Mr. Smith giving out an animal-like bellow which might possibly be pain. He charges again, and there's another strike from Justine's weapon: it's followed by a heavy thud, and the sound of more books being dislodged, as Mr. Smith stumbles over into some shelves. There's a lull in the fighting then, while Mr. Smith gets his breath back.

MR. SMITH: Mmmm. You appear to have snapped one of my horns. If I weren't wholly unique, I'd most probably be a pariah in polite society.

JUSTINE: I'm sure I can snap the other one, if it'll make you more attractive.

MR. SMITH: And would you enjoy that?

F/X: A pause. A shocked pause, in fact, as if Justine's been slapped in the face. The library returns to its normal, quietly-humming self.

MR. SMITH: Tell me. Is this the first time today you've found yourself attacking someone for no given reason?

JUSTINE [uncertain]: What do you mean?

MR. SMITH: You strike me as a little old for playing this sort of hero.

F/X: Another pause. Then... the sound of a shadow-weapon being dropped.

MR. SMITH: Personally, I'd rather settle down with a good book.

JUSTINE [uncertain... she sounds almost embarrassed by herself]: Fighting has become... something of a habit, I'm afraid.

MR. SMITH: Yes. Perhaps this is a role to which you're not entirely suited.

JUSTINE: I'm sorry, I don't have time -

MR. SMITH: No, of course. Your "monsters".

JUSTINE: If you'll excuse me...

F/X: Justine hurries away. Quick footsteps on the library floor.

MR. SMITH: Nonetheless, you might like to consider the benefits of our extensive reference section.

F/X: Justine freezes.

JUSTINE: I'm sorry?

MR. SMITH: Cousin Justine? That *is* who you are?

JUSTINE: You know me?

MR. SMITH: I know the collection. Intimately.

JUSTINE: Are you suggesting that I'm... mentioned? In some of these books?

MR. SMITH: Among all the secrets of House society? I can't believe you're surprised. You're mostly in the newer works, of course. Particularly when it comes to the chapterhouse records of House Lolita. I suppose it's rather like being a fictional character yourself, isn't it?

JUSTINE: It takes one to... no, I'm sorry, that was rude. Did you say *mostly* the newer works?

MR. SMITH: Mmmmmmm. Although there was one text... now, where is it?

F/X: He takes a book off the shelf.

MR. SMITH: You'll have to forgive me. I always say "now, where is it?" when I find a book. It's an affectation, I know full well where they all are. Here.

F/X: Presumably he hands the book to Justine. We can hear her flip through the pages.

JUSTINE: I can't read this.

MR. SMITH: I believe it's in a code of some description. Godfather Morlock was rather obsessive on that score, as I understand it.

JUSTINE: Godfather Morlock? He wrote this?

MR. SMITH: Yes.

JUSTINE: How did it come to be here?

MR. SMITH: Acquisitions aren't really my department. If I had to memorise the histories of all these books as well as everything else, I'm sure I'd go quite mad. I may be a side-effect of temporal engineering but I've got *some* pride.

JUSTINE: You're a little like the Godfather yourself, did you know that?

MR. SMITH: Your psyche must be a bad influence on me.

F/X: Justine inspects the book more carefully, turning over the pages one at a time.

JUSTINE: I need to translate it.

MR. SMITH: Sadly, I don't believe I can let you remove it from the library. At present you don't have a ticket, and the books *are* my

responsibility.

JUSTINE [cynical about this]: As far as I can gather, a large part of your collection's currently in flames.

MR. SMITH: Vandalism isn't my responsibility either.

JUSTINE: Why did you give me this, if I can't read it and I can't remove it?

MR. SMITH: I recommend that you keep turning the pages.

F/X: Justine keeps turning the pages. A little faster now.

JUSTINE: No. It's no good. I can't make sense of any of -

F/X: The scene around her - i.e. the background noise around her - suddenly, rapidly distorts. It's as if she's instantly heading into one of her flashbacks, without any kind of warning.

JUSTINE [gasps]: *Ohh -*

F/X: The distortion increases, the library background becoming louder and twisting out of shape. In fact what we're hearing is the next scene beginning to enter the picture, as we rapidly...

Fade into...

F/X: The chaos of the Faction's attack on Aunt Fiora's house. Things are much as we left them: the first assault is still in progress, with the riders trying to reign the horses in and the animals smashing the room to pieces. (Right now this should sound quite direct and in-your-face, as if it's going on all around us instead of being background noise.)

EMMA [shrieking]: Stop it! *Stop it!*

F/X: It doesn't stop. One of the horses bellows right into our ear, as if it's come perilously close to trampling one of the lead characters.

FIORA [obviously terrified]: Who are you people? Why are you doing this?

JUSTINE: Mrs. Venn. Follow me.

FIORA: Please -

JUSTINE: Run!

F/X: Over the din, we can hear footsteps starting to run up the stairs. Two pairs.

EMMA: *Aaaaah!*

JUSTINE: Emma! Here!

F/X: More feet on the stairs. It's at this point that the sound of the horses begins to move into the background, as Justine and company move away from it and towards the top floor.

JUSTINE: The animals won't be able to follow us. Not upstairs.

EMMA: Justine!

F/X: Huge, heavy impacts on the stairs, almost enough to shatter the wood. One of the horses is attempting to follow them, snorting as it comes.

EMMA: They're *trying* to follow us.

JUSTINE: The bedroom. Quickly.

F/X: We move with the three main characters as they finish hurrying up the stairs, the sound of the horses moving even further into the background. But we can still hear it even after they run into the bedroom and slam the door shut.

JUSTINE: The door. We have to stop them opening the door. The bed...

FIORA [confused, scared and no longer quite herself]: What's going on? What's happening to my home?

JUSTINE: I'm sorry, Mrs. Venn. Emma, if we can move the bed...

F/X: With some effort, the bed is moved across the room towards the door. The sounds of property damage carry on downstairs.

EMMA: And the wardrobe?

JUSTINE: Yes. The wardrobe.

F/X: They start to move the wardrobe. It's going to take some doing.

FIORA: Wait! That's... Lookie's old clothes. They're all that's left.

JUSTINE: Mrs. Venn, please...

F/X: The wardrobe is moved towards the door, but apparently topples before it gets there, as we hear it crash against the wall.

EMMA: They're going to kill us, aren't they? They're going to kill *all* of us.

JUSTINE: I'm not sure. How far is it to the next house?

FIORA: I... I don't know. The other side of the pond...

EMMA: Will anybody hear us? Will anyone know we're being attacked?

F/X: Suddenly, the noise seems to die down. Through the door we can still hear the sounds of the horses' hooves, and maybe even the voices of some of the Cousins, but the hunters have obviously got the animals under control. The girls listen for a few moments before Justine speaks.

JUSTINE: Can you hear anything?

EMMA: No. Oh, wait... **[listens]** ...they're moving. They're still moving around. I can hear voices.

JUSTINE: Is it the two men? The ones in charge.

EMMA: I don't know. I can't tell. It sounds as if they're -

F/X: The sound of a shadow-weapon, but muffled, as it smashes into the door from the other side. There's the splintering of wood.

EMMA [shrieks]: *Eep!*

FIORA: *My house...*

F/X: More shadow-weapon strikes. At least one Cousin is hacking his way through the door.

JUSTINE: They're breaking through the door!

EMMA: What *is* it? That noise...

JUSTINE: I don't know. Some sort of axe, or...

F/X: One of the strikes penetrates the door, so there's a particularly loud splintering sound and from this point on all the shadow-strikes seem slightly louder.

EMMA: That's not an axe!

FIORA: Why won't they leave us alone?

F/X: More shadow-weapon strikes. The door is being taken to pieces. There's definitely more than one Cousin on the other side.

FIORA: *Why won't they leave us alone?*

F/X: The hacking gets louder, and louder, until we...

Fade into...

F/X: The same scene, but from the other side of the door. In the background we can hear the shadow-weapons attacking the wood, while Morlock and Godfather Sabbath stand in the foreground. We can probably still hear some activity from downstairs.

SABBATH: They've barricaded the door.

MORLOCK: Yes. That may have something to do with the fact that they're utterly terrified.

SABBATH: I'm only doing what I have to. How long before the Cousins break through?

MORLOCK: Oh... seventy-eight seconds, maybe seventy-nine. It's hard to be precise. The girls seem rather resourceful, don't they?

SABBATH: Putting furniture in front of a door? Hardly.

MORLOCK: Context, Godfather. Context. Barely sixteen years old, brought up in a society where girls are expected to be almost exclusively

passive, and yet within moments of being threatened they're ready to start the siege of Mafeking six months early. I'd call that resourceful.

SABBATH [after a short pause for reflection]: *If* you won the bet...

MORLOCK: Ah yes. "If".

SABBATH: You won't. But *if* you did... which one would you take?

MORLOCK: I don't intend to "take" anyone. Now, why this sudden interest, I wonder?

SABBATH: You said the... "temporal dysfunction"... was focused on one of them. Which one?

MORLOCK: Oh, it hardly matters. They were both in the right place at the right time, I'm sure. Either of them would make ideal material for the next carrier project. Let's see, now... the blonde, or the redhead? They both seem stable enough...

SABBATH [scoffing]: "Stable". Your last one went insane.

MORLOCK: The burden of responsibility.

SABBATH: And that weapon you forced on her.

MORLOCK [like a man producing something from his pocket]:
Ah! Just the thing.

SABBATH: A coin?

MORLOCK: Certainly. Heads the blonde, tails the redhead.

F/X: A little *ting* in the foreground as Morlock flips the coin in the air. It lands on the floor.

MORLOCK: Well then. That settles it.

F/X: There are a few last-minute flurries of shadow-weapon activity in the background, before the door completely gives way.

SABBATH: We're breaking through. It's time.

F/X: More than a little activity, as the Cousins scurry to get through the doorway.

F/X: Inside the bedroom. Ideally we should get the idea that the Cousins are climbing into the room over the remains of the wardrobe, or at least smashing the last remnants of wood out of the way.

EMMA: We need more furniture!

JUSTINE: There's nothing else. Nothing big enough.

F/X: One final blow from a shadow-weapon dispatches a rogue piece of furniture.

FIORA [she's completely lost it by now]: Monsters. The monsters. Just like Tuluku always said.

EMMA: Those *things*. Those weapons...

JUSTINE: I know. I keep seeing their shadows, but -

F/X: The Cousins flood into the room. Heavy, booted feet on the floorboards. We should get the feeling that the girls are being surrounded, that they really don't stand a chance of resisting here.

EMMA: *Eeeeeee!*

JUSTINE: Emma! Get Mrs. Venn away from the door!

F/X: For the most part, the sound of the boots comes to an end. The Cousins are all in the room, but we can hear one final pair of feet climbing through the shattered door. Godfather Sabbath is entering.

JUSTINE: What... do you people want?

F/X: Sabbath stops in the middle of the room.

SABBATH: I'm here for Fiora Venn. That's all.

FIORA: I haven't done anything. I haven't done anything wrong!

SABBATH: You're my direct ancestor. That's enough.

JUSTINE: You must be mistaken...

SABBATH: She's my father's grandmother. It's the strongest gene-path between the generations. You wouldn't understand.

FIORA: I don't have any children. Not yet.

JUSTINE: Sir... she's just a helpless widow. She can't do anybody any harm.

SABBATH: It's the right of descent. Her blood belongs to me.

EMMA: That doesn't make sense!

SABBATH: I'm her legacy. I'm the sum total of her life. Therefore, I claim rights over her genetic structure and her position in history.

MORLOCK [entering]: It's no use arguing with him, I'm afraid. Godfather Sabbath's a stickler for the Faction's traditions. Or at least the older and less genial ones.

EMMA: Faction...?

JUSTINE: Wait. Your... traditions. This is about *time*, isn't it?

MORLOCK: You know, you're very perceptive. The truth is... Sabbath here has just been appointed Godfather of the Military Wing of Faction Paradox. It's a rather tenuous position, given the number of enemies we have. This is just a way of protecting his own timeline.

FIORA [quietly]: Tuluku. *He* used to talk that way...

JUSTINE [confused]: By killing his ancestors?

SABBATH: According to a strict ritual procedure. Mother first. Then grandfather. Then great-grandmother.

MORLOCK: Working his way backwards, you see. Leaving him with no genetic heritage, and nothing to connect him with the present day. Adrift in history, as it were. I'm sorry, that was rather pompous, wasn't it?

SABBATH: I thought so.

EMMA: This is insane! This is madder than Justine!

JUSTINE: *Thankyou*, Emma.

MORLOCK: It's the way these things are done. By rights, of course, killing his ancestors should make the Godfather here cease to exist. You wouldn't believe how hard it is, balancing the figures to make sure he stays in one piece.

SABBATH: This has gone on long enough.

F/X: Godfather Sabbath draws his weapon. It's not a shadow-weapon, this time: the sound is more like a sword being drawn from a sheath, but if

so then it's quite a *long* sword. It's basically the kind of sound you expect to hear just before a beheading.

SABBATH: Great-grandmother. I don't want to hurt you any more than necessary.

FIORA [almost in tears]: Please...

JUSTINE [hurriedly]: Sir... whatever your "Faction" is. Whatever you represent. If you can kill defenceless women just to save yourselves, then you can hardly make a claim to any sort of noble heritage.

MORLOCK: Then again, he *is* her descendant. So in a sense she only has herself to blame.

SABBATH: You two. Hold her.

F/X: Clumping feet and shuffling noises. Two of the Cousins doing as they're told.

FIORA: *Ohh...*

EMMA: You can't do this!

MORLOCK: I'm afraid Sabbath here hardly ever does anything else.

JUSTINE: Is there nothing we can do? No way we can reason with you?

SABBATH: I'm only doing what's necessary.

JUSTINE: You claim to have rules. Traditions. Is there no provision in those rules to give her a... a reprieve?

MORLOCK: Hmm. Excellent question.

SABBATH [ceremonially, and ignoring everyone else]: By this action, I remove myself from my blood; I deny my own past; I do whatever I must; so help me.

MORLOCK [talking over Sabbath here]: There *are*, of course, certain circumstances under which the hunt can be called to a halt...

SABBATH: By this intention, I remove myself from my birth; I deny my own lineage; I do whatever I can; so help me...

JUSTINE [during this]: What circumstances?

MORLOCK: Various technicalities. In theory, as the Godfather's Second I *could* end the procedure with a single word.

EMMA: Then do it!

SABBATH: By this ritual, I remove myself from my race; I deny my own heredity; I do whatever I should; so help me.

MORLOCK [again, during the recitation]: You have to understand, I have a duty to the rules of the hunt. No matter how archaic they may be.

EMMA: But -

JUSTINE: Sir. Can you or can't you stop this murder under the rules of the hunt?

SABBATH [reaching a climax]: By this body, I remove myself from my need; I deny my own experience; I do whatever I will; so help me.

MORLOCK [very brief pause for effect during this]: Yes. I can.

JUSTINE: How?

MORLOCK: It's really very simple. Godfather?

SABBATH [obviously mere moments from the kill]: By this action, this intention, this ritual, this body, this being -

MORLOCK: She's *pregnant*.

F/X: That shuts *everybody* up. Complete silence all round. The birds are probably still singing outside, but that's it.

SABBATH: What...?

MORLOCK: I take it your mask can only read heat-patterns? Not biodata signatures?

SABBATH: No, but -

MORLOCK: Then as your Second in this endeavour, I have to inform you that Mrs. Venn here is pregnant. I can see the child from here, and he looks a lot like your grandfather to me.

EMMA: That's ridiculous! My Aunt Fiora is *not* pregnant!

MORLOCK: Four weeks and two days of foetal development, if I'm any judge. Congratulations, Mrs. Venn. It's a boy.

FIORA [bewildered]: I...

EMMA: This can't be right. How can you be pregnant? Who...?
[Realising, with some shock.] Mr. Faraday? From the tea-house?

FIORA: I... didn't want to say. After what happened with Tuluku...

EMMA: You mean... you and him...?

FIORA: When you get to my age, Emma -

JUSTINE [cutting off this conversation]: I'm not sure I understand. Does this change things?

SABBATH [furious]: Of course it changes things!

MORLOCK: Godfather Sabbath here has already disposed of his grandfather. And I wouldn't make any long-term investments on the child's behalf, if I were you.

FIONA: What?

MORLOCK: Never mind. The point is that under the rules of the hunt, it's remarkably bad form to execute the same ancestor twice. The biodata calculations have a nasty habit of collapsing in on themselves.

SABBATH [darkly]: You knew. You knew I couldn't kill her.

MORLOCK: I felt you deserved your moment of high drama. **[To the others.]** It's all about the mathematics, you see. The codes and calculations of history. If you want to kill your ancestors without vanishing into your own chronistic aneurysm, then there are only certain points where you can interrupt your family history and get away with it. The Godfather got rather waylaid before we came here, which is why we arrived in such a late window. *Too late*, apparently.

JUSTINE: Then Mrs. Venn is safe. You don't have to kill anybody.

F/X: Not exactly a sound effect, but there's a significantly ominous pause before Morlock answers.

MORLOCK: *I* don't have to kill anybody. But then, it's not my hunt.

SABBATH: You two girls. You're her relatives?

JUSTINE [warily]: To a degree.

MORLOCK: Which means they're technically *your* relatives, Godfather. Or would be, if you hadn't removed the intervening generations.

SABBATH [ignoring him]: Which of you is most closely related to her?

EMMA: I am.

JUSTINE [even more wary]: Emma -

SABBATH: You're sure?

EMMA: Of course I'm sure. I'm her niece.

JUSTINE: Emma, you shouldn't -

SABBATH: Then I'm sorry.

EMMA: Sorry?

F/X: The sound of Godfather Sabbath's weapon, whatever it may be, slicing through the air. It ends with a sound that isn't remotely pretty. It's the sound of the weapon piercing Emma's body.

EMMA: *Hhaah...*

JUSTINE [screams]: *Emma!*

FIORA [whimpering]: No. Please, no...

F/X: Godfather Sabbath removes the weapon. Justine and Fiora can be heard scrambling forward to attend Emma.

EMMA [and this doesn't sound nice]: *Ahh... nnnh...*

JUSTINE: Oh, God. Oh, God. Emma, don't... don't try to move...

SABBATH: I did what I had to. [**Important to get the tone right here... Sabbath did what he did without hesitation, but he didn't enjoy it and he's trying to suppress any sense of self-disgust.**]

EMMA: ...*gnn... aaahah...*

MORLOCK [much darker than usual]: A pity. The coin came up heads, as well.

FIORA: This is my fault. This is all my fault.

SABBATH: You're my Second. Are you satisfied with this?

MORLOCK: If that's the word you want to use.

EMMA [sounds like an attempt at last words]: I... don't...

JUSTINE: Shh! Shh, don't try to talk. Just... relax...

EMMA: But I don't... *understand...*

F/X: Emma is dying here. She might struggle to take a few final breaths before she goes, and there'll probably be a quiet *thud* as her head falls back. It takes her relatives a moment or two to take in the horror of this.

FIORA [still quiet, but distraught]: *Noooooo...*

JUSTINE: She's... [**Trying to sound angry, but angry's not what she does.**] ...you've *killed* her.

SABBATH: Morlock. Let's go.

F/X: The heavy feet of Sabbath move towards the door. There's a slight pause before the Cousins start to follow him, shuffling away from the scene.

JUSTINE [finally snapping into anger]: You've killed her! You didn't have to do it! You didn't have a *reason* to do it! She was my cousin, and you -

SABBATH [subtext of "don't bother me, child, it's hard enough already"]: It was all I could do

JUSTINE: All you could *do*???

MORLOCK [still sombre]: If he can't kill his great-grandmother, then the hunt ends here. He can't move any further up his own family tree.

JUSTINE: That's a reason???

SABBATH: The girl -

JUSTINE: Emma! Her name's... [**Anger to confusion.**] ...she was called Emma...

SABBATH: She was the closest available relative. If we're lucky it might cause some interference in the genetic pathways, open up some more windows. Give us a chance to start the hunt again somewhere further down the family history.

MORLOCK: Yes. Because otherwise you'll be going back home with half of your relatives intact, won't you, Godfather? And how will anyone be able to respect you then?

SABBATH: That's enough, Morlock.

F/X: The sound of the Faction leaving. The Cousins are climbing out through the broken door, boots are treading on splinters of wood, etc.

JUSTINE: *Might?* You killed my cousin because... it *might* help you kill more people?

SABBATH [departing]: I don't make the rules.

F/X: The Cousins depart, and the sound of their footsteps fades (although there's still someone left, as we'll soon discover). All that's left is the "normal" background noise of the room, plus Fiora as she begins a quiet, bewildered sobbing.

JUSTINE [anger, but controlled now]: Why? Why do you *do* this?

MORLOCK [now even *he* seems weary]: Because... there are monsters in the world, Justine. They can walk the Earth without seeming any more real than fairy-stories. They make their plans while everyone else is asleep, and they can move the walls of the maze without anybody ever knowing it. And sometimes... one has to *be* those monsters.

F/X: Nothing but the birds outside. And the sobbing.

JUSTINE: Please. Just leave us alone.

F/X: Morlock hesitates for a moment. Then we hear his heavy boots on the floorboards, as he follows his colleagues out of the room across the splinters.

Fade.

F/X: Outside the house. The Cousins are getting on their horses and riding off, so the hunt's drifting apart piece by piece. If it's at *all* possible to suggest it in sound, then as we join the scene Morlock is climbing up onto his own horse. Maybe the sound of the front door closing beforehand, to suggest that the last huntsman has left the building?

SABBATH [once Morlock's in the saddle]: What about the bet?

MORLOCK: Yes. Technically, of course, I won. Even if you killed my first choice of ingenue.

SABBATH: The other one won't be any use to you. Not now.

MORLOCK: That remains to be seen.

SABBATH [snorts]: Hm.

F/X: Sabbath kicks his horse into gear. It trots off, and it's some distance away before Morlock speaks again.

MORLOCK [to himself]: Four. Three. Two. One.

F/X: The door of the house opens. There's a pause as the individual in question takes in the scene outside, although judging by the horse noises there's only Morlock left.

JUSTINE: Morlock? Is that your name?

MORLOCK: Justine.

JUSTINE: Sir. I just wanted to say...

MORLOCK: Yes?

JUSTINE: I won't allow you to get away with this. Sir.

MORLOCK: Hmm. Now, let me see if I understand the situation correctly. You're a sixteen-year-old girl with no weapons, no formal military training and only the vaguest idea of what's going on around you. Furthermore, you've just seen my associate brutally murder your cousin and best friend. And yet... you feel quite comfortable threatening me in that fashion?

JUSTINE: I don't believe you'll hurt me, sir.

MORLOCK: No? Your reasoning being?

JUSTINE: It's not in the rules of the hunt.

MORLOCK: Very true. So you want to fight me, is that it?

JUSTINE: I *will* fight you. [**Then less confident, as if she's just realised what she's saying.**] Insofar as I can.

MORLOCK: Ah. An admirable attitude, and extra marks for the word "insofar". Tell me... do you *really* want to be able to face things like Godfather Sabbath? Like myself?

JUSTINE [hesitant]: ...yes.

MORLOCK: Well then. I can't think of anyone better to teach you than myself.

JUSTINE [trying to be righteous again]: You murdered Emma -

MORLOCK: Godfather Sabbath murdered Emma.

JUSTINE: If you think I'd care to learn *anything* from you...

MORLOCK: All paths lead to the ,inotaur, in the end. You can take my word for it. There really is an *awful* lot you don't know.

JUSTINE: I wouldn't wish to know it. Not from your sort of... monster.

MORLOCK: And exactly what kind of monsters *are* we? [**No answer to that.**] You see human life as being the very definition of goodness. That's only understandable. You are, after all, both human and alive. And you can't underestimate the survival instinct.

JUSTINE: You're -

MORLOCK [insistent enough to stop her talking]: We're different. History is our flesh. The skin and bone are almost irrelevant. Interesting, I grant you, but hardly the issue.

JUSTINE: You're talking about a human being! A human being you killed!

MORLOCK: I'm afraid not. I'm talking about a historical process. A process of which both Godfather Sabbath and your friend are mere parts. That's the way we see the universe, you see. Us and our enemies. **[A sigh, or something that's as close to a sigh as Morlock can manage.]** If only you could see past the purely physical. There are stories written across generations. Weapons that can re-write the world from the inside out. Organisms made of entire human cultures, so you can only see the tissue if you can watch it from the skin of time. You'd be amazed. Really you would.

JUSTINE [levelly]: My friend has a hole in her stomach. It's covered in blood.

MORLOCK: Yes. That's certainly true. But you've already seen further than that today, haven't you?

F/X: The sound of Morlock spurring on his horse. It whinnies before it begins to move.

MORLOCK: I trust I'll be seeing you again?

JUSTINE [just as level, just as emotionless]: I'll come looking for you. Sir.

MORLOCK: I never doubted it for a moment.

F/X: The horse gallops off. As Morlock rides into the distance, there's nothing left but background noise... but seconds later the sound-field is

once again distorting, quickly surrounding "us" with echo as Justine returns to the present-day and we...

Fade into...

F/X: Library background, the home of Mr. Smith. We hear a single book being dropped to the floor.

JUSTINE [breathing heavily]: What was that?

MR. SMITH: Mmmmmm. You've damaged the spine. I should think there'll be a fine to pay.

JUSTINE: I was sixteen again...

MR. SMITH: An interesting volume, this one. I believe Godfather Morlock's code was designed to have an aesthetic impact as well as an intellectual one.

JUSTINE: Meaning?

MR. SMITH: The shapes on the page have a direct effect on the psyche. As far as I can make out, the book's designed to trigger certain memory-states in the reader. You have to wonder what his target audience was. I'll put this back on the shelf, shall I?

F/X: He puts it back on the shelf.

MR. SMITH: I tried it myself, a while ago. I seemed to remember being a much younger and smaller bull-headed creature with an interest in pulp detective novels. Which is remarkable, considering that I don't actually have a past.

JUSTINE: It was a message.

MR. SMITH: All literature is.

JUSTINE [a long pause... then she finally makes her mind up]: I need to find the exit. Can you tell me where it is?

MR. SMITH: I can show you the way out of the library. However, that's very much the edge of the universe as far as I'm concerned.

JUSTINE: Show me. Please. I think I know what I have to do.

Fade.

F/X: The outrigger platform. We can hear burbling from all angles, suggesting that we're surrounded by the tracker-creatures, but none of them are yet moving into the foreground. Their grunting is more subdued than usual, so we get the impression that they're biding their time and waiting for instructions in the presence of their superior.

SHUNCUCKER [calling out]: I'm warning you. I don't want to have to hurt anyone.

F/X: This causes a few non-committal screeches from the creatures.

SHUNCUCKER: All right, that's a lie. You've got me.

DEMETRA: They're primed to track down anything with time-altered biodata. They don't tend to give up easily.

SHUNCUCKER: Wait a minute. Haven't *you* got time-altered... whatever it was? Didn't you just tell me that? **[To the creatures.]** Hey! D'you hear that? Your boss. She's the one you want. Look at her!

F/X: There's no change to the background burbling.

SHUNCUCKER: Go on, attack her! You know you want to.

F/X: The creatures obviously aren't impressed.

DEMETRA: Now... I don't know how they do things where you come from. But where I come from, it's considered bad business practice to engineer a race of biological killing machines and forget to tell them not to kill their creator.

F/X: The creatures suddenly become more excited. It's as if they know that they're about to be ordered into action.

DEMETRA [addressing the trackers]: All right. Kill her.

F/X: Finally, the creatures move forward across the platform towards Shuncucker. We should get the feeling that they're now moving in on her quite slowly, as if they're stalking her rather than falling over each other to tear her to pieces. They're working their way up to a climax, but - just as they seem to be getting there - there's the quiet sound of somebody stepping through the hatch and onto the platform.

JUSTINE: Wait.

F/X: The monsters are briefly distracted, and stop moving. They mumble amongst themselves in a "what's going on?" sort of way.

SHUNCUCKER: Oh, God. It's the sprog.

JUSTINE: Evidently you need help.

SHUNCUCKER: No I don't. **[Pause.]** All right, I do. But not from you.

DEMETRA: Ah. The other one.

SHUNCUCKER: Ignore her, she's not as important as I am.

F/X: The creatures can't decide who to kill first. Justine steps forward into the middle of the platform.

DEMETRA: More to the point... Cousin Justine, isn't it? As far as I'm aware, your only weapon's a shadow. Although there seems to be some confusion about who it belongs to.

JUSTINE: I assure you, my shadow's more than enough.

SHUNCUCKER: It's no good. *I* told her that, but she doesn't listen.

DEMETRA: My associates here are physically immune to shadow attacks. Your weapons don't even connect with them.

JUSTINE: And they do everything you tell them?

DEMETRA: They've got my mark.

JUSTINE: The tattoos. Of course. Memetic printing.

DEMETRA: Memeodermic. [**Surprised, but interested.**] You know memetic technology...?

JUSTINE: A little. Just what I learned from Godfather Morlock. Weapons that can re-write the world from the inside out.

DEMETRA: So I've heard. But my family prefers to -

F/X: Demetra stops dead, as if suddenly realising something. The burbling of the monsters has dropped to a mere murmur while they wait for orders.

DEMETRA [a little shocked]: - weapons?

SHUNCUCKER: Oh, *now* I get it.

DEMETRA [to the creatures, suddenly losing control]: *Kill her! Kill the one without the armour! Now!*

F/X: They don't need telling twice. Screeching horribly, the creatures scramble across the platform to attack Justine in a mass of arms and legs. There are various sounds of Justine being grappled, mauled and scratched by the creatures, probably involving more damage to her clothes.

JUSTINE: *Mmmf...*

DEMETRA: Don't let her use her shadow! Don't let her even -

F/X: Over the background of Justine being manhandled, Shuncucker drops her shadow-weapon. It rings out across the platform.

SHUNCUCKER [calling out]: Shadow! Give me one of those weapons she was just talking about. Now.

DEMETRA: *No!*

F/X: Shuncucker's new shadow-weapon. It makes a muted but high-pitched shrieking sound when she wields it, not unlike feedback.

SHUNCUCKER: Hah. Fits live a glove. **{Calling out.}** Hey, you!

F/X: The sounds of violence immediately cease. From the creatures there are various surprised grunts, as if they're looking up from their work and going "uh?".

SHUNCUCKER: Stop killing what's-her-name.

F/X: There's a *thump* as the creatures let go of Justine, letting her drop to the floor.

JUSTINE [frostily, picking herself up]: Thankyou.

DEMETRA [shouting]: Do as I say! Kill the girl!

F/X: The creatures burble amongst themselves. They sound like they're trying to agree on a course of action.

JUSTINE: It's no good, I'm afraid. Shuncucker's using a memetic pick.

SHUNCUCKER: Am I? I wondered about that.

JUSTINE: It's a weapon built to break and override memetic connections. I'd ask my own shadow to provide me with one, but I admit, I'm not really familiar with the way they work.

SHUNCUCKER: So? Neither am I.

JUSTINE: True. But when we were fighting earlier, I did notice... you're very good at using weapons you don't understand.

SHUNCUCKER: That's true.

DEMETRA [finally losing her cool]: They're immune. They're supposed to be immune to shadow weapons.

JUSTINE: Only on a physical level, I'm afraid. And sometimes you have to see past the purely physical.

F/X: The monsters are getting restless. It almost sounds as if they're agreeing with Justine.

JUSTINE: Now, Miss Kine. Your ships should be here at any moment. Since we seem to have the upper hand, I think we should make an arrangement.

DEMETRA [curious, but wary]: You're suggesting a deal?

SHUNCUCKER: Pff. I don't think so.

JUSTINE: I'm sure even *you* wouldn't care to take on an entire fleet from Siloportem, Cousin Shuncucker.

F/X: Shuncucker swishes her shadow-weapon again. It makes the same feedback noise as before.

SHUNCUCKER: So... this memetic thing I've got. This lets me send new instructions to the tattoo-heads, is that it?

JUSTINE: That *is* the idea.

SHUNCUCKER: Good. Hey, monsters!

F/X: The faceless monster equivalent of "who, us?".

SHUNCUCKER: Kill your boss over there.

DEMETRA: What?

JUSTINE: Shuncucker -

F/X: The creatures have no problem with this. They begin to stalk towards Demetra, seeming quite satisfied with the choice of target.

SHUNCUCKER: That's more like it.

DEMETRA: Cousin Justine... please. You know you can't get out of here without me -

SHUNCUCKER: You just watch us.

F/X: The creatures fall on Demetra. The mauling, manhandling sounds begin again as they surround her and move in for the kill.

JUSTINE: Shuncucker, stop it. You don't need to do this.

SHUNCUCKER: So?

DEMETRA: *Aaaaah...*

F/X: It sounds like they're trying to rip her open. There's tearing cloth as they attack Demetra, plus what could be the sound of breaking bones. Fortunately the attack is too far away from "us" for us to hear all the details.

JUSTINE [calmly]: They're going to tear her apart, Shuncucker.

DEMETRA: *Please! Please... you can't let them...
aaaaaaaaaaaaahhh...*

F/X: The sounds get nastier. There's a noise which could well be an arm being torn out of its socket. There's nothing remotely funny or slapstick about this.

JUSTINE: You really don't care, do you?

SHUNCUCKER: *Do you?*

F/X: The monsters burble happily as more bones are torn from their joints and the last vestiges of Demetra's clothing are shredded.

DEMETRA: *...please... pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeease -*

F/X: The last sounds of a struggle fade away, as Demetra goes limp and stops fighting. The mauling sounds continue, however, as if the creatures are attacking her body just to be on the safe side.

JUSTINE: Well. I hope you're satisfied.

SHUNCUCKER: That'll be the day. Behind you.

JUSTINE: I'm sorry?

MANDEEMA: Nnrhgrhrrngrnh!

F/X: A much more solid and direct kind of violence, as Mandeema lashes out and hits Justine.

JUSTINE: Aah -

F/X: Justine falls to the ground. Mandeema falls on top of her, raining down blows. Justine tries to fight back but obviously can't hit as hard.

MANDEEMA: Rngrnh! Nnrhgrhrz! Rngrnh!

JUSTINE: Shuncucker -

SHUNCUCKER: Oh, *now* you want my help. Monsters?

F/X: The monsters stop picking over Demetra's corpse. They're pricking up their ears, if they actually *have* ears.

SHUNCUCKER: Throw this thing over the side of the dock, will you?

MANDEEMA: Grnrhnr! Nrrhn nrrhn nrh rngrnh! Nrh...

F/X: Squawking contentedly, the creatures scabble across the platform towards Mandeema. Mandeema hardly seems to notice: she's too busy punching Justine.

MANDEEMA: Grnrhnr! Nnrhgrhr!

F/X: The creatures move in on Mandeema. The scuffle with Justine ends as Mandeema's dragged away, and throughout the next line her "voice" becomes increasingly distant, as the monsters haul her off into the background. Mandeema's obviously struggling.

MANDEEMA: Grnrhnr! Grnrhnr! Nnrhgrhr! Nnrhgrhrz!

F/X: The struggle ends as the creatures throw Mandeema over the side of the dock. Her scream...

MANDEEMA: *Nnrrrrrrrrhhhhhhrrrrrrrrrr!*

F/X: ...gets quieter and quieter as she falls into infinity. Finally there's nothing but the hushed (and vaguely satisfied) mumbling from the monsters.

SHUNCUCKER: The big one wasn't immune, by the way. You could have just hit her.

JUSTINE [frosty]: That's very helpful.

F/X: Now we become aware of a new noise. It's not unlike an engine, but it's a soft, sibilant and smooth-edged sound, a ship that's slowly moving into view from the far distance and heading for the platform. It's barely audible now, but it rises throughout the following exchange.

SHUNCUCKER: Looks like our ship's coming in. God. It looked smaller a minute ago.

JUSTINE [still sour]: That might be because it was further away.

SHUNCUCKER: The size of it! Looks like a great big... what do you call those fish things? Not fish. Like fish, but bigger.

JUSTINE: And are you going to explain to them that their employer's been torn to shreds by monsters, or do you just intend to fight all of them?

SHUNCUCKER: What do *you* think?

JUSTINE: What you did was stupid.

SHUNCUCKER: Killing the enemies of Faction Paradox? Oh, yeah. That's really, really stupid. I thought we were meant to be on the same side?

JUSTINE: It wasn't practical.

SHUNCUCKER [more irritable than usual]: Shuncucker. Last scion of the Faction homeworld. Did you hear that bit, or weren't you listening?

JUSTINE: What's that got to do with -

SHUNCUCKER: I was *there*. I was there when the Houses killed off half of everyone I ever knew. I was there when they tore the skin off the whole bloody world. I was the last one to get out alive. You wouldn't even remember.

JUSTINE: That changes nothing. I saw the same thing happen to the Eleven-Day Empire. I know people like us are going to be hunted for the rest of our lives, you don't have to tell me about -

SHUNCUCKER [angry]: You don't know *anything*. I'm older than you, I'm tougher than you -

JUSTINE: - you're stupider than me -

SHUNCUCKER: - and I'm prettier than you.

JUSTINE: I wouldn't know. You've never taken off that mask.

SHUNCUCKER: People like her... that Kine woman, whatever her name was... they're the enemy. We don't make deals with them. We kill them. Because they killed us. Are we clear on this?

JUSTINE: You're actually insane, aren't you?

SHUNCUCKER: And how long have *you* thought you're some kind of messiah?

JUSTINE [thrown]: Not... long. Since the end of the Empire...

SHUNCUCKER: Exactly. Not as long as me. So don't tell me how to do this job. All right?

F/X: By now the engine sound is right on top of us, but it's too gentle and too graceful to blot out any of the conversation. It seems to be decreasing in pitch, the ship powering down its systems as it approaches.

SHUNCUCKER: The ship's coming in to dock. You want to stay and fight, or have you got something better to do?

F/X: There's a pause. Then the sound of Justine's footsteps, walking away towards the hatch.

SHUNCUCKER: Where are you going?

JUSTINE [in the background]: To find another way out of this prison.

SHUNCUCKER: There isn't one.

F/X: Justine vanishes through the hatch. Just as the ship comes to a halt at the platform, its engine noise settling down to a steady throb.

SHUNCUCKER: Fine. Do what you like.

F/X: The next voice we hear is male, and comes from the ship. It's amplified through some kind of P.A. system, so it's loud, harsh and in direct contrast to the sound of the ship itself.

VOICE: Do not attempt to move. We are lowering the gangplank.

F/X: With the same graceful, mechanical hissing that accompanied the engines, a hatch opens up in the ship. There's a low electrical hum as a gangplank extends, and settles into place on the platform.

SHUNCUCKER [to herself]: Suits me.

VOICE: You have been identified as a known offender against the codes and edicts of Siloportem. You will be taken into custody by the authority of the Blood Coteries and with the consent of the Cardinal Legislative. Any resistance will be met with lethal force.

SHUNCUCKER [calling out]: Excuse me... can I ask you something?

VOICE [uncertain pause]: Do not attempt to move -

SHUNCUCKER: I just want to ask you something, all right? **[No response.]** Have you people got special time-tattoos, or anything like that? You know, like your boss had?

F/X: No response. Nothing but the throb of the ship's power systems.

SHUNCUCKER [to himself]: No, I didn't think so.

VOICE: Step onto the gangplank.

SHUNCUCKER: Oh, I'll step onto the gangplank. Don't you worry. **[To the tracker-creatures.]** You ready?

F/X: The creatures, which have until now been gently burbling in the background, answer her in a way which sounds reasonably positive.

SHUNCUCKER: Right then. Here we come.

F/X: An explosion of noise. Shuncucker swings her shadow-weapon, and there's the usual feedback sound, but she charges the ship at the same time with a great big Brian-Blessed-style battlecry. The four tracker-

creatures charge alongside her, screeching as they go, so there's the sound of chaotic, clamouring footsteps as they hurl themselves towards the gangplank. Yes: it's a *Butch Cassidy* ending.

SHUNCUCKER: *Yaaaahaaaaahhhhhh!*

F/X: We quickly fade into the next scene as gunshots ring out... so it's impossible to say whether the gunshots are being fired here, or there.

Fade into...

F/X: The assembly area of the prison, where many of the convicts are still gathered. But the place has gone to hell. Above the general background noise of squawking inmates, we can hear shouts, gunshots and running footsteps, as if a full-scale riot's finally broken out. It doesn't sound like a proper firefight - the shots come from a variety of weapons, and the shooting's too sporadic - but there are frequent bursts of energy-fire across the stereo picture. It's in the middle of this chaos that we find Veeble and Selvynkesh, both of them out of breath.

VEEBLE: We've got to find cover. We've got to find somewhere to hide.

SELVYNKESH: There *isn't* anywhere.

VEEBLE: We should at least get rid of these uniforms...

SELVYNKESH: Why? So we can be shot by the Military instead of the convicts?

VEEBLE: Justine!

SELVYNKESH: What?

JUSTINE [background]: Mr. Veeble!

F/X: Justine runs forward to meet them, although frankly we probably won't be able to hear her footsteps over the panic.

JUSTINE: What's happening?

VEEBLE: The House Military's arrived. The troops have started cutting through the access points.

JUSTINE: You mean, they're not inside the prison yet? What about the gunfire?

SELVYNKESH: The inmates. They've started killing each other.

VEEBLE: They've been opening the caskets to get reinforcements. But most of the ones who've been let out don't even know where they are, they're just grabbing weapons and shooting anything that moves.

F/X: Two or three bursts of energy scorch their way across the scene and impact against a nearby wall. The implication is that the fighting's getting dangerously close.

JUSTINE: We're too exposed here. This way.

SELVYNKESH: We don't have anywhere to go...

JUSTINE [moving into the background]: Just follow me.

Fade into...

F/X: Prison corridor acoustics. The riot-sounds aren't as pronounced here, but they're still audible, so we get the impression that we're just off the

assembly area. Even so, occasional bursts of gunfire can be heard close at hand. Justine, Veeble and Selvynkesh enter, at pace, and come to a halt.

VEEBLE: What happened to Kine?

JUSTINE: Dead. Her people must be in the labyrinth by now.

SELVYNKESH: I told you. We can't even use the exit platform.

VEEBLE: You do realise... this is all your fault.

SELVYNKESH: Thankyou. You don't have to remind me.

JUSTINE: His fault?

VEEBLE: He was the one who let the first batch of prisoners out.

JUSTINE: I see. For any particular reason?

SELVYNKESH: No. Yes. I...

F/X: And at this point, something peculiar suddenly happens to Selvynkesh's voice. It sounds almost as if he suddenly has *two* voices, both speaking at once, one of them whispering underneath the other: in fact it's almost exactly like Sabbath's voice at the end of Volume Three, except that there might possibly be the suggestion of a female tone to the "under-speech". Indeed, there seems to be a sudden change to Selvynkesh's whole personality.

SELVYNKESH: ...I had a moment's inspiration.

VEEBLE: What's happened to your voice?

SELVYNKESH: You know, I wasn't sure that was going to work. Justine?

JUSTINE: He's channelling.

VEEBLE: He's what?

JUSTINE: Channelling. Something else is talking through him.

SELVYNKESH: Hello? Is anybody actually listening?

VEEBLE: He's possessed?

JUSTINE: In a sense. I saw it happen on Earth. Just before my trial. [To Selvynkesh.] I'm listening. Might I know who you are?

SELVYNKESH: It's taken me the last six months to get this far. The least you could do is give me some credit.

JUSTINE: I... **[realising]** ...Mistress Culver?

VEEBLE: Who?

JUSTINE: I thought only agents of the Houses could do this?

SELVYNKESH: Well, I'm adaptable. I'll explain once you're back here with us. In 1763.

VEEBLE: Wait a minute. You. This Culver person. Were you the one who told Selvynkesh to let the prisoners out?

SELVYNKESH: Obviously. We knew we were going to have trouble getting into the prison physically, but Mr. Selvynkesh had a kind of... weakness.

JUSTINE: You planted yourself in his mind.

SELVYNKESH: Just a little.

VEEBLE: Why?

SELVYNKESH: Well, we couldn't exactly rescue Justine while the Houses were watching. But now the Military's opened up so many channels...

JUSTINE: You can slip in within anyone noticing.

SELVYNKESH: That's the idea. Speaking of which...

F/X: The sound of Justine's timeship, materialising out of nowhere. It sounds just as it always does, but it's not particularly loud so it obviously isn't very large at the moment.

SELVYNKESH: Your timeship awaits.

JUSTINE: My welfare must be very important to you, Mistress Culver.

SELVYNKESH: A lot's changed, back on Earth. We've got plenty to talk about.

VEEBLE: So, er... can you people give me a lift back to the Homeworld? I mean, give *us* a lift.

SELVYNKESH: I don't think that'd be a very good idea, do you? This *is* a stolen timeship.

JUSTINE: I have to agree.

VEEBLE: You can't just leave us here! This place is going to pieces!

SELVYNKESH: Then why don't you just put yourselves into two of the caskets?

VEEBLE: What?

SELVYNKESH: The Military's bound to take stock of all the prisoners, once the shooting's over. All you've got to do is wait for them to rescue you. There can't be many places around here safer than a different time-frame.

VEEBLE: Actually... that's a good point.

F/X: Justine opens the door of the timeship. (Come to think of it... do we *have* a noise for the door of the timeship?)

JUSTINE: We should leave before we're noticed. Mr. Veeble?

VEEBLE: Oh. Yeah. Well... thanks for your help, and everything. Or... was all of this your fault in the first place?

JUSTINE: I'm sure the official inquiry will be able to answer that.

F/X: Justine's voice starts to fade as she enters the timeship.

JUSTINE: Goodbye, Mr. Veeble.

F/X: The door of the timeship closes behind her.

VEEBLE [a bit lost for words]: Yeah. Bye.

F/X: The timeship dematerialises. As it vanishes, Selvynkesh speaks again: his voice has returned to normal.

SELVYNKESH [slightly dazed]: *Wuuuuh.*

VEEBLE: You all right?

SELVYNKESH: I think so. What happened to that girl?

VEEBLE: You must have blacked out.

SELVYNKESH: What?

VEEBLE: Doesn't matter. I can't be bothered explaining it anyway.

F/X: From nearby, the sounds of the prison riot suddenly grow louder. A new kind of weaponry seems to have come into play: we can hear whole volleys of loud, machine-gun-speed shots, energy weapons far more harsh and abrasive than any we've heard so far. It's accompanied by an upsurge in panic from the inmates, many of whom are now starting to scream in addition to everything else.

SELVYNKESH: It's the Military. They've cut their way in. It's going to be a massacre

VEEBLE: Well... we could always put ourselves into a couple of the caskets. Not going to be anywhere much safer than that around here.

SELVYNKESH: That's true... **[suddenly more optimistic]** ...that's true. They're bound to take stock of the prisoners after -

VEEBLE: Yeah, I know.

SELVYNKESH: Ow.

VEEBLE: What's wrong?

SELVYNKESH [scratching sound]: The tattoo. It's started itching again.

VEEBLE: Yeah. You ought to get that removed, once we get home.

F/X: Veeble and Selvynkesh move off down the corridor. Throughout the following exchange their voices fade into the background, until they can barely be heard over the sounds of combat.

SELVYNKESH: If it *can* be removed.

VEEBLE: It's just ink. Can't be that hard to get rid of it.

SELVYNKESH: Not just ink. It talks.

VEEBLE: It what?

SELVYNKESH: Talks. Or it used to, anyway.

VEEBLE: You're good at getting your body taken over, aren't you?

SELVYNKESH: What do you mean?

VEEBLE: Never mind.

F/X: They fade out completely. Meanwhile the gunfire and the shouting gets louder, and louder, as the House Military forces its way into the prison. Eventually we...

Fade.

F/X: Exterior background noise. We're outdoors, but there's no birdsong this time. There's just a breeze, suggesting an exterior space, much emptier than before. We're going for that "night-time" feel, essentially.

ELIZA [in the distance, calling out]: Justine?

F/X: There's no reply. Cousin Eliza comes into the foreground.

ELIZA: Justine.

JUSTINE [formally]: Eliza.

ELIZA: How you doing?

JUSTINE: I'm well. **[Softening a little.]** Thankyou.

ELIZA: We really need to talk. About... things. A lot's been happening, while you've been away.

JUSTINE: So I'm told.

ELIZA: It's, ahh... it's dark out here.

JUSTINE: Yes. I suppose it is.

ELIZA: So. I was just wondering... **[struggles to find the words, then decides to come straight to the point]** ...why *are* we here?

JUSTINE: Geddis Fields. It's near where I grew up. **[Pause.]** Where I *will* grow up. More than a hundred years from now.

ELIZA: You want to leave a message for yourself, see whether you remember it? We're Faction Paradox, we do that kind of thing.

JUSTINE: Perhaps I already did.

ELIZA: Well, *that* sounds ominous.

JUSTINE: Here. In this field. This is where I saw it.

ELIZA: Saw what?

JUSTINE [sighs]: A face. In the sky.

ELIZA: You've never said anything about that before.

JUSTINE: It might not have happened before. Or perhaps it must have done. I think it was the reason Godfather Morlock picked me.

ELIZA: Because you saw faces? What kind of face was it, anyway?

JUSTINE: The most beautiful woman I'd ever seen. I remember... I wanted to be just like her.

ELIZA: You're really not *expecting* me to follow much of this, are you?

JUSTINE [almost laughs]: There was something about her. Something I recognised. No... something I recognise *now*, but didn't then. It just made me think... **[Pause.]** ...do you think Godfather Morlock always told us the truth?

ELIZA: Wouldn't know. I was under Godfather Sabbath most of the time.

JUSTINE: Yes. I saw him kill my best friend. Did you know that?

ELIZA: Yeah. Yeah, I heard about that. **[Trying to be light.]** Didn't stop you joining up, though, did it?

JUSTINE: It was... complicated.

ELIZA: So what's changed? What's bothering you now?

JUSTINE: Nothing.

F/X: They start to walk away from us. Their voices gradually fade into the breeze.

JUSTINE: I worry. About the shadow I'm carrying.

ELIZA: Yeah, I think we *all* worry about that.

JUSTINE: Every so often, I think it might be driving me mad.

ELIZA: You've only just noticed?

F/X: And once they move away, there's nothing left but background noise.

Fade.

End of Volume Six.